

Message Text

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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 004271

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, AO

SUBJECT: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MILITARY SITUATION
IN ANGOLA

1. ON EVE OF OAU SUMMIT MEETING, WE ANTICIPATE THAT USSR AND RADICAL AFRICAN STATES THAT SUPPORT MPLA WILL STEP UP THEIR EFFORTS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT FNLA/UNITA FORCES ARE ON VERGE OF COLLAPSE AND THERE IS NO NEED TO EVEN CONSIDER ANY COMPROMISE ALTERNATIVE TO RECOGNITION OF MPLA AS "LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, IN ANGOLA. TO MAKE THIS POINT, THEY WILL DEPEND ON COMBINATION OF WIDELY-PUBLICIZED MILITARY VICTORIES AND GENERAL IGNORANCE OF THEIR AFRICAN AUDIENCE OF REAL SITUATION IN ANGOLA.

2. IF A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF AFRICAN STATES ARE TO RESIST RADICAL STEAM-ROLLER TACTICS AT ADDIS ABABA, THEIR LEADERS MUST BE MADE FULLY AWARE, IF THEY ARE NOT
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ALREADY, OF CERTAIN BASIC REALITIES ABOUT SITUATION IN ANGOLA.

3. PRESENT FIGHTING HAS ITS ROOTS IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE

PERIOD WHEN DIFFERENT TRIBAL-BASED GROUPS AND LEADERS FOUGHT FOR POWER AGAINST PORTUGUESE. MPLA CLAIM TO HAVE BEST EDUCATED LEADERSHIP, WHILE GENERALLY TRUE,

DESERVES QUALIFICATION: 7 OF 10 MPLA LEADERS INCLUDING PRESIDENT AGOSTINHO NETO ARE MULATTOES; THERE HAS BEEN SOME BLACK-MULATTO FRICTION BECAUSE BLACKS DO NOT FEEL THEY GET EQUAL SHARE OF POWER; FORMER BLACK MPLA PRESIDENT CHIPENDA SPLIT WITH NETO AND JOINED FNLA. MAJORITY OF UNITA LEADERS ARE ALSO UNIVERSITY-TRAINED. JONAS SAVIMBI STUDIED POLITICAL SCIENCE AT LAUSANNE UNIVERSITY. MOREOVER, THEY REPRESENT FOR MOST PART OVIMBUNDU TRIBE WHICH IS LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP IN ANGOLA WITH EST. 2.4 MILLION MEMBERS COMPARED TO EST. 1.3 MILLION KIMBUNDU, WHO FORM TRIBAL AND POWER BASE OF MPLA, CENTERED FORTUNATELY FOR THAT ORGANIZATION IN LUANDA AREA. IN ADDITION TO OVIMBUNDU UNITA ALSO REPRESENTS MOST RURAL CHOKWE AND NGANGUELA PEOPLE IN MORE SPARSELY POPULATED EAST AND SOUTH, AND INCLUDE CABINDANS, BAKONGO AND OVAMBU AMONG LEADERSHIP CADRES. FNLA UNDER HOLDEN ROBERTO IS MOST ETHNICALLY-BASED OF ALL FACTIONS REPRESENTING PRIMARILY 700,000-STRONG BAKONGO TRIBE.

4. AS WE ANTICIPATED, SOVIET/CUBAN INVOLVEMENT WITH SUPERIOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS BEGINNING TO TAKE ITS TOLL PARTICULARLY AGAINST FNLA IN THE NORTH. POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS CAN ONLY FURTHER COMPLICATE SITUATION FOR FNLA AND PARTICULARLY UNITA FORCES. BUT TO ASSUME THAT MPLA CAN IMPOSE GOVERNMENT ON ALL OF ANGOLA WHICH DOES NOT SHARE POWER WITH OVIMBUNDU AND BAKONGO LEADERSHIP IS TO IGNORE HISTORY OF PAST TRIBAL AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES AND LONG STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PORTUGUESE. UNCOMPROMISING MPLA APPROACH CAN ONLY LEAD TO PROLONGED INSURGENCY IF NOT CIVIL WAR, WITH PRESSURE ON FOREIGN SUPPORTERS OF EACH FACTION TO RENEW OR CONTINUE THEIR INVOLVEMENT AND

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POSSIBLE DISINTEGRATION OF ANGOLA. IF OAU IS GENUINELY CONCERNED TO END ALL FOREIGN INTERVENTION, IT MUST ALSO SEE THAT SOME FORM OF GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IS ESTABLISHED. THIS IS REAL LESSON WHICH AFRICAN LEADERS SHOULD DRAW FROM FOLLOWING STATUS REPORT ON MILITARY SITUATION AS OF JANUARY 5.

5. MILITARY SITREP:

A) GROUND SITUATION -- NORTH:

THE FNLA/ZAIRIAN FORCES IN NORTHERN ANGOLA CONTINUE TO PERFORM POORLY. THE IMPORTANT FNLA RESUPPLY BASE AT

NEGAGE HAS FALLEN TO MPLA/CUBAN FORCES SUPPORTED BY
T-34 TANKS AND CARMONA,
THE PRINCIPAL CITY IN THE FNLA AREA, HAS ALSO FALLEN

' TO THE SAME MPLA/CUBAN SPEARHEAD. ON THE COAST,
A DIFFERENT MPLA/CUBAN FORCE IS THREATENING THE OTHER
FORWARD FNLA BASE AT AMBRIZ. SHOULD - AMBRIZ
FALL, FNLA WILL HAVE SUFFERED ANOTHER SERIOUS MILITARY
AND POLITICAL DEFEAT AND WOULD BE FORCED TO WITHDRAW
INTO THE HILLY, FORESTED TERRAIN OF NORTHERN ANGOLA,
WITH ONLY TWO OTHER AIRFIELDS AVAILABLE TO THEM FOR
RESUPPLY.

B. GROUND SITUATION -- SOUTH:

THE UNITA FORCES, WITH SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORT, HAVE MADE
IMPORTANT LOCAL GAINS ON THE FRONT LOCATED BETWEEN
CELA AND QUIBALA ON THE MAIN NORTH/SOUTH HIGHWAY 200
MILES SOUTH OF LUANDA. THESE LOCAL SUCCESSES IN THE
PAST TWO WEEKS, AGAINST CUBAN/MPLA FORCES, DID NOT RESULT
IN A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH BUT DID IMPROVE UNITA'S
DEFENSIVE POSTURE.

C. GROUND SITUATION -- EAST:

AFTER TAKING THE IMPORTANT RAIL TOWN OF LUSO, THE UNITA/
SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES TURNED NORTH TOWARD HENRIQUE DE
CARVALHO AND EAST TOWARD THE RAIL TERMINUS TEIXEIRA DE
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SOUSA.

THE COLUMN PRESSING TOWARD THE NORTH WAS
DELAYED BY SEVERAL BLOWN BRIDGES AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE
THEY HAVE TAKEN HENRIQUE DE CARVALHO DESPITE SOME
UNITA STATEMENTS CLAIMING ITS CAPTURE. HOWEVER, UNITA
HAS ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING A BUFFER
ZONE AROUND THE RAILROAD AND THE BLOWN BRIDGES WILL ACT
AS A TEMPORARY BARRIER TO ANY MPLA/CUBAN COUNTER-
OFFENSIVES IN THAT REGION.

D. ALIGNMENT OF FORCES:

AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE UNITA/FNLA ALLIANCE CONTROLS
APPROXIMATELY 70 PERCENT OF THE TERRITORY OF ANGOLA
AND APPROXIMATELY THE SAME PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION.
THIS IS AN IMPORTANT FACT WHICH WE WOULD LIKE ADDRESSEE
POSTS TO EMPHASIZE ON THE EVE OF THE SUMMIT. POSTS WHICH
FEEL IT WOULD SERVE OUR INTERESTS TO DO SO SHOULD

PREPARE A MAP OF THE BATTLE LINES TO PRESENT TO THE
HOST GOVERNMENTS BEFORE THEIR DELEGATIONS DEPART FOR
ADDIS. A SERVICEABLE MAP CAN BE COMPOSED BY DRAWING

A LINE FROM AMBRIZ THROUGH CARMONA AND DUE EAST TO THE ANGOLA/ZAIRE FRONTIER. ALL THE AREA NORTH OF THIS IS CONTROLLED BY FNLA (EXCLUDING CABINDA WHICH IS

HELD BY THE MPLA). IN THE SOUTH, ONE MAY DRAW A LINE APPROXIMATELY ALONG THE 11TH PARALLEL FROM THE COAST INLAND UNTIL IT INTERSECTS THE MAIN HIGHWAY BETWEEN LUSO AND HENRIQUE DE CARVALHO, THENCE SLIGHTLY NORTH AND EAST TO A POINT JUST BELOW TEIXEIRA DE SOUSA ON THE ZAIRIAN/ANGOLAN FRONTIER. THE AREA NORTH OF THIS LINE UP TO THE FNLA-HELD AREA IN NORTHERN ANGOLA IS CONTROLLED BY THE MPLA. THE AREA SOUTH OF THAT LINE IS CONTROLLED BY UNITA.

E. SOVIET/CUBAN INVOLVEMENT:

THE SOVIET AIRLIFT OF SUPPLIES INTO LUANDA CONTINUES AS DOES THE CUBAN AIRLIFT OF FORCES. WE ESTIMATE THAT THERE ARE 7500 CUBANS IN ANGOLA, MOST IN CONFIDENTIAL

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DIRECT COMBAT ROLES. WE HAVE NO DEFINITIVE FIGURE ON SOVIET PERSONNEL BUT BELIEVE THAT ABOUT 400 ADVISERS AND TECHNICIANS ARE IN ANGOLA. WE HAVE NUMEROUS INTELLIGENCE REPORTS OF T34 TANKS BEING USED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND INDICATIONS MIG AIRCRAFT MAY BE IN LUANDA. THE MPLA HAS REPAIRED

SEVERAL FORMER PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE MILITARY CRAFT (INCLUDING HELICOPTERS AND PISTON ENGINE FIGHTER BOMBERS) LEFT BEHIND BY THE DEPARTING PORTUGUESE TROOPS AND THEY ARE BEING USED AGAINST THE UNITA FORCES.

F. SOUTH AFRICAN WITHDRAWAL:

WE HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS WILL WITHDRAW ALL THEIR PERSONNEL FROM THE FIGHTING FRONTS PRIOR TO THE CONVENING OF THE OAU MEETING ON JANUARY 8. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL MAINTAIN FORCES IN ANGOLA GUARDING DAM SITES ALONG THE NAMIBIAN/ANGOLAN FRONTIER.

6. POSTS MAY DRAW UPON THE ABOVE IN CONVERSATIONS WITH HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON ANGOLA. KISSINGER

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